CLAIMS

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A computer-based system for truck rentals, comprising:

a server which processes user inputs from a user's computer over a

5   communications network and provides information responsive thereto to the user's computer

over the communications network from which a service contract is generated and confirmed, the

server comprising:

a memory in which is stored a plurality of data sets relating to (a) trucks which

can be rented and associated rental prices for the trucks, (b) towing accessories that can be rented

10   and towed vehicles with which the towing accessories can be used, (c) towing accessories and

associated rental prices for the towing accessories, (d) expertise-based guidance relating to

trucks, and (e) expertise-based guidance relating to towing accessories; and

programming responsive to user inputs to access the memory and provide data

from respective data sets to user computer over the communications network.

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2.   In a computer-based system for truck rentals which includes a server which

processes user inputs from a user's computer over a communications network and provides

information responsive thereto to the user's computer over the communications network from

which a service contract is generated and confirmed, wherein the improvement comprises a

20   memory in which is stored a data set relating to towing accessories that can be rented and towed

vehicles with which the towing accessories can be used, and programming responsive to a user

input identifying a vehicle to be towed which accesses the memory and provides to the user

computer over the communications network data indicating availability or not of a towed accessory for the identified vehicle to be towed in accordance with the data set.

3.   In a computer-based system for vehicle rentals which includes a server which processes user inputs from a user's computer over a communications network and provides information responsive thereto to the user's computer over the communications network from which a service contract is generated and confirmed, wherein the improvement comprises a memory in which is stored a data set relating to vehicle pick-up and drop-off locations and programming responsive to a user input identifying a geographical location in which the vehicle is to be picked up and a geographical location in which the vehicle is to be dropped off which accesses the memory and provides to the user computer over the communications network data indicating at least two locations closest to the geographic location input for pick-up and at least two locations nearest to the geographic location input for drop-off.

4.   The system of claim 1, 2 or 3 wherein the communications network is the Internet and the programming provides the data to the user computer in the context of one or more web pages.

5.   The system of claim 1 comprising a payment-processing subsystem for establishing payment arrangements with the user in response to user inputs providing payment data communicated to the server over the communications network.

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6.　　The system of claim 1, wherein the memory stores a data set relating to discounts available to qualified users, and wherein the server, responsive to user inputs providing data relating to discount eligibility, provides a quote for rental of a selected truck including a discount corresponding to the user inputted discount eligibility data.

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7.　　The system of claim 1, wherein the server, responsive to user inputs corresponding to truck selection, pick-up and drop-off locations, and a pickup date, generates a service contract data set, including a quote for the truck rental, associated with the user to be provided to the user's computer over the communications network.

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8.　　The system of claim 7, wherein the user inputs include a selection of moving accessories; and

　　　　wherein the server generates the service contract data set associated with the user and including the costs for the accessories in the quote for the truck rental.

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9.　　The system of claim 7, wherein the user inputs include a reservation confirmation command; and

　　　　wherein the server, responsive to the reservation confirmation command, generates a confirmation message to be provided to the user's computer through the

20　communications interface.

10.　　An Internet-based system for aiding users to create and confirm reservations for truck rentals, the system comprising:

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a web server for providing a plurality of web pages accessible through the Internet and for processing user inputs received through the Internet from a user's computer operating an Internet browser displaying the plurality of web pages, at least one web page having at least one input field for receiving the user inputs; and

5   a backend server operatively connected to the web server and responsive to the user inputs, the backend server having:

a memory for storing the plurality of web pages, for storing truck-related information in a database, and for storing user-generated reservation information; and

at least one program modules for processing the user inputs and the truck-

10   related information to determine and display to the user a set of closest locations associated with a departure location and a destination location specified by the user, to access and display directions from a user-specified address to the departure and destination locations, to generate towing guide information corresponding to a user-specified vehicle to be towed by the rented truck, to generate and display a quote for the truck rental corresponding to the user inputs, for

15   processing payment information provided by the user, for generating the reservation information from the user inputs, and for confirming the reservation to the user with a confirmation message.

11.   The system of claim 10, wherein the at least one program module, responsive to modifications of the user inputs prior to confirmation of the reservation, modifies the reservation

20 information.

12.   In an Internet-based system for aiding users to create and confirm reservations for truck rentals which includes a web server for providing a plurality of web pages accessible

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through the Internet and for processing user inputs received through the Internet from a user's computer operating an Internet browser displaying the plurality of web pages which include at least one input field for receiving the user inputs, the improvement comprising a web page including data fields providing all information which the system provides to a user information

5 necessary for a service contract in response either to user input data or data available from the system in which all also data fields may be modified on the web page by the user without having to revert to another web page.

13. A computer-based method for truck rentals, comprising the steps of:

10 providing expertise guidance to a user for selecting trucks which can be rented;

providing expertise guidance to a user for selecting towing accessories that can be rented for a particular vehicle to be towed;

in response to user input, providing pricing information for a selected truck;

in response to user input, indicating whether a towing accessory is available for

15 the user input information responsive to the towing accessory expertise guidance; and

if a towing accessory is available, providing pricing information for the available towing accessory.

14. In a computer-based method for truck rentals which provides truck availability

20 and pricing information, the improvement comprising the steps of providing towed vehicle identification data to the user, receiving a towed vehicle selection, determining whether an accessory is available for the particular selected vehicle, and informing the user of the result of the determination.

15.   In a computer-based method for vehicle rentals which processes user inputs from a user's computer over a communications network and provides information responsive thereto to the user's computer over the communications network from which a service contract is generated and confirmed, wherein the improvement comprises receiving user information which a user

5   provides as part of the process of requesting a reservation for a vehicle identifying a vehicle pick-up location and a vehicle drop-off location, and providing the user with information identifying at least two locations closest to the vehicle pick-up location and at least two locations nearest to the vehicle drop-off location input by the user.

16.   In an Internet-based method for aiding users to create and confirm reservations for truck rentals comprising providing information to a user which a user uses to select useful truck rental information, receiving the information input by the user and generating a reservation from for the user, the improvement comprising generating a reservation form on a web page which conations all reservation information provided in response to user input which may be changed

15   by the user directly on the form on that web page without having to access another web page.

17.   A method for facilitating truck rentals comprising the steps of:

providing a plurality of web pages accessible to a user through the Internet, at least one web page including a form for receiving user inputs;

20   storing in a memory truck-related information including types of trucks and associate rental prices;

storing in the memory expertise-based information, including vehicle-specific towing requirements and directions to respective locations of truck rental affiliates; and

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processing user inputs with a server using the truck-related information and the expertise-related information to assist the user to generate and confirm a service contract to rent a selected truck.

5   18.   The method of claim 17, wherein the expertise-based information includes a table of vehicle towing information; and

wherein the step of processing includes the steps of:

receiving user-input selections of equipment including a selection of a truck for rental and a selection of a vehicle type for towing by the selected truck;

10   accessing the vehicle towing table to determine if the selected vehicle is capable of being towed by the selected truck; and

generating a towing advice indication for display to the user whether the selected truck is appropriate for towing the selected vehicle.

15   19.   The method of claim 17, wherein expertise-based information includes an affiliate table of truck-rental affiliates including geographic locations and a direction table storing travel directions to the affiliates; and

wherein the step of processing includes the steps of:

receiving user-inputs corresponding to a departure location and a

20   destination location;

accessing the affiliate table to determine the closest affiliates to the departure and destination locations, respectively;

accessing travel directions for the closest affiliates; and

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providing the travel directions for display to the user.

20. The method of claim 17, wherein the server includes a payment-processing sub-system; and

5   wherein the processing step includes the steps of:

receiving user inputs corresponding to payment information; and

establishing payment arrangements with the customer corresponding to the user inputs.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein the payment-processing sub-system includes credit-card processors; and

wherein the user inputs include credit card information.

22. The method of claim 19, wherein the user inputs indicate discount eligibility; and

15   wherein the processing step includes the steps of:

generating a quote for rental of a selected truck from the user-accessible data sets; and

adjusting the quote using a discount corresponding to the user inputted discount eligibility.

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23. The method of claim 19, wherein the user inputs correspond to truck selection, departure and destination locations, and a pickup date; and

wherein the processing steps includes the steps of:

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generating a service contract data set, including a quote for the truck rental, associated with the user.

24.   The method of claim 22, wherein the user inputs include a selection of moving

5   accessories; and

wherein the step of generating the service contract data set includes the step of:

adding the costs for the accessories in the quote for the truck rental.

25.   The method of claim 22, wherein the user inputs include a reservation confirmation command; and

wherein the step of processing includes the steps of:

receiving the reservation confirmation command; and

generating a confirmation message to be provided to the user.

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